Night

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Night

by moves_like_water

Summary

Will Graham has an 'incident' and shortly thereafter meets a strange and alluring man at a bar. Later, he finds that the man is hired by the FBI to work alongside him. When he can't be avoided the two become fast friends and their relationship shifts to increasingly dark places.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

Alexander Chamberlain was a killer. He lived for violence and he could get high off the salty metallic fumes of fresh blood and the sweet rush of adrenaline. To him, there was nothing sweeter than watching the light fade from a person's eyes as his thumbs pressed against their windpipe. Blue lips. Red blood. Dark, unseeing eyes. He would never be considered a connoisseur of the arts, but this he could admit was beautiful. This was priceless.

Alexander Chamberlain's eyes were black. Black as the congealed blood that covered Will Graham's shirt and arms and fists. Adrenaline was the best medicine; he couldn't feel any pain from his knuckles that had been destroyed from rapid repetitive contact with the face and body of the Boston Boa. Warmth settled in the pit of his stomach in an unfamiliar but not unpleasant way. He thought he might be smiling but perhaps he was only bearing his teeth with a warning that had come too late.

He was calm as he cleaned up. They were in Chamberlain's private home and nobody knew that Will was here. No one would ever know. Perhaps Jack Crawford would be perplexed as to why an extremely active serial killer suddenly stopped in the middle of his streak but Will would find an explanation. There were always reasons and his were always good; he was the best profiler they had, after all. The kitchen had tile floor, when scoured with bleach there would be no trace of the blood. Every smooth surface wiped down with careful consideration. Will's prints wouldn't be found if somebody took the time to look but he was certain no one would look. Chamberlain wouldn't be missed for quite some time. Disposal of the body was easy and methodical. If he didn't think about it Will could almost pretend that this was only another crime scene. A mental reenactment to profile a killer. "This is my design."

Will watched his hand shake as he lifted the glass to his lips. The cheapest whiskey they had on the rocks- it was cheaper to drink at home but the thought of being there at the moment was too much to handle. The gulp went down smooth though he was unable to stop the shudder that started at the base of his neck even while his veins lit up with fire from the alcohol. At this point he was unsure how much he'd had, although it was only due to the fact that his mind was elsewhere. He held his liquor well.

He'd never been to this bar before. It was only about twenty minutes out from Wolf Trap but he typically preferred to sit at home with his dogs and a bottle of Jack. There was something tiresome about dimly lit dirty small-town bars filled to the brim with small-town day drinkers that often stayed the night. Normally he would be uncomfortable in such a scenario, but there was something about his aura that warded the other patrons away; this he was thankful for. He'd come here because he didn't want to be alone, didn't want to sit there while his dogs stared at him knowing that he'd done something sick. At the same time there was no appeal for him in talking to any of the bar's regular customers.

He stared down at the bottom of his glass. Shiny cubes of ice slowly melting with just the tiniest hint of amber tinting the corners. Somewhere behind him the ceaseless chatter flowed

together to create a deafening hiss- one that all of a sudden became the sound of wind rattling the tallest branches of bare winter trees. A shiver gripped his body once more and he was aware of himself standing in the creek where he often went to fish, yet now he wasn't wearing his gear but bloodied jeans and the flannel that he'd burned not twenty-four hours ago. Up ahead a massive stag, deep like a starless night snorted and shook his expansive antlers as he walked against the current. A black feather loosened itself from his neck and it blew towards him shooting like an arrow rather than fluttering. Will felt white pain in his skull and reached up to feel velvety sharp buds breaking from his own skin.

"Are you alright?" The thick European accent sliced through the fog coming off the water and brought Will back to reality.

Will blinked slowly, his vision transitioning from the ice blue tones of the river to the low orange of the bar. The stag stood momentarily behind the bartender who stopped drying the mug he was holding when he realized the scruffy looking stranger was staring at him. Will gave a single nod of his head to the question and offered up what was more a grimace than a smile in apology. He looked down at his empty glass, not wanting to make a scene. The bartender turned to a patron sitting at the end of the bar and quietly asked him if he could get her anything else. Though he wasn't really listening, it occurred to him that the man was American.

Almost on cue the voice sounded again. "Are you alright?"

Will slowly rolled his head toward the man who had spoken. The scent of expensive cologne drifted around him from a few seats down, something both oaky and floral with an underlying scent of something that threatened to bring his mind back to a dark room and a dead man and his own hands black with drying blood. The man was dressed in a black leather jacket of the expensive 'movie star' variety. His hair was parted and left an immaculate wave of bangs that hung low over his forehead favoring the left side. If he was being honest with himself, Will wasn't entirely convinced of the man's existence. A man who was clearly this well off did not belong in a shitty piss-pot of a pub in middle of nowhere Falls Church, Virginia, yet here he was.

"Forgive me. I studied medicine at Johns Hopkins. I only ask after your well-being because you look as if you were having an episode."

Will snorted. Trust this to be the one night that that some good samaritan high-class doctor to come in and start asking questions when he inevitably made a scene.

"I assure you, doctor I'm fine." He responded through clenched teeth, not looking up to make eye contact.

"Not fond of eye contact, are you?"

"Eyes are distracting." Will rubbed a hand down his face, an attempt to brush away haunted memories. "And I don't mean to be rude, but I didn't come here for medical attention."

"Shying away from polite conversation. That's only fair. I suppose I am imposing on a stranger. That was never my intention."

“Alright.” Will gave a half-smile to the man, still refusing to look him in the eye. “Well thank you for your concern.”

Will rolled his eyes and went back to his empty glass, the bartender refilling it as he went past. He drank slower than before, casually keeping the corner of his eye trained on the doctor. He kept to himself as much as Will had been, after their brief conversation he’d spoken to no one but the bartender when he came by to refill his glass of wine. Half the time he appeared to be admiring himself in the mirror behind the counter, but closer observation revealed that he was taking in his surroundings. His eyes moved slowly, inspecting the bar patrons through their reflected image. Will got the impression that he was watching one man in particular, a really stupid-looking bastard, loud and obnoxious, clapping his buddies on the shoulder and yelling every so often. The doctor hid it well, though with Will’s particular skill set it didn’t go unnoticed. There was something calculating and cold in the doctor’s gaze and its familiarity was frightening.

He broke away from his observation to pull a pack of cigarettes from the pocket of his coat. This being exactly the shitty type of place to neglect a no-smoking rule, a glass ashtray lay on the bar a few feet away and Will slid it towards himself, casually lighting up like he’d been doing it for years. Up until last night he hadn’t touched a cigarette since his days as a cop. It was like riding a bike; you don’t forget. On his first drag he inhaled the smoke into his lungs. Fuck the fact that he was killing important tissues, he really didn’t give a shit. Jack Crawford would be so pleased when he found out Will had taken up his old habit.

Feeling more confident than he had in days, or perhaps sensing some sort of comradery with the strange man who watched his fellow man like animals, Will found it in himself to speak. “Who is he?”

The stranger’s lips perked up to form a shallow smile and he looked back at Will and the look in his eyes was dangerously flirtatious.

“Who is who?”

“I see you watching,” Will said. “So who is he?”

“An arrogant bastard by the looks of it. Disturbingly rude.”

Will chuckled. “You sound like you have a personal vendetta against the guy.”

“We may have crossed paths at one point or another.”

A lightning bolt of ice shot down his spine but Will managed to stop himself from physically shuddering. “Did you follow him here?” Will said it like a joke, but the way the guy was acting, at least part of him was convinced this was the truth.

“An unfortunate coincidence.” For the first time Will allowed the dark eyes to meet his. Unsettling and alluring, Will found he could not see what was behind them and looked away. Empath that he was, it was rare that he couldn’t get a good read on a person. Yes, something was very off about the doctor.

“What brings you out here?” A nod at the glass of red wine in the doctor’s hand. “It’s painfully obvious that you don’t belong.”

“I could say the same about you.”

“I’m not the one wearing a thousand dollar jacket.”

“Not having expensive taste doesn’t mean you belong in a place like this.”

“Oh yeah? What does?”

“You. Your personality. You normally drink alone, am I correct? This doesn’t bother you, but why was tonight different? You’re not here for company, but tonight you don’t want to be alone.”

“Are you psychoanalyzing me?”

“My apologies.”

“I thought you said you studied medicine.”

“I was a surgeon many years ago. I’ve been in psychiatry for quite some time.”

“Should have guessed.”

“Do I look the type?”

“Not in dress, but in character. You have that look about you. See everyone and judge everyone based upon their tiniest mannerisms. It’s a dangerous hobby.”

“Dangerous in what way?”

“Are you saying you disagree?”

“I’d love to hear your opinion on the matter.”

“In my opinion there’s two reasons. If you judge someone based entirely off small actions you might see too much, and be unable to determine if your assumptions are true,” he paused, looking into the man’s eyes in a way he’d normally avoid. “And if you spend so much time trying to figure out the nature of another you may forget to hide your own.”

Something in the stranger’s gaze darkened. He covered it quickly, but not enough to stop Will from getting a glimpse behind the mask. His vision glitched and he saw the stag behind the man, antlers poking up as if they belonged to his company. He knew he should be afraid but instead he just felt an insatiable curiosity. For a moment the two just looked at each other, Will surprising himself when he didn’t look away. The cigarette between his fingers was gathering ash and he tapped it into the tray, shifting his attention before it got uncomfortable. He raised it to his lips and took a shaky drag to steady himself. If you focus on your inhaling you stop focusing on blood coursing in and out of your veins.

“Something is eating at you.”

“Don’t have to be a shrink to figure that out. Unfortunately, this is where I draw the line in conversation with friendly strangers.”

“We don’t have to be strangers, you know.”

“We don’t. But I would prefer to keep it that way. If you don’t mind.”

“Of course. It was only an offer. I get the feeling that you and I are a lot alike.”

“Precisely.”

His companion chuckled. “It’s unfortunate. Although this night was looking as if it was about to be a failure. I must say, talking to you has changed the course of things.”

“My night’s been changed as well, but I’m not entirely sure how I feel about it.”

“It’s been changed in what way?”

“I’ve been feeling dangerous.”

“And?”

“And I think I like that.”

Will’s own words surprised him. He was feeling reckless but he wasn’t sure if it was an extension of his actions the other night, or if it was the effect of the predator who he’d somehow managed to be sitting next to. He thought the toxicity of this man was only adding more fuel to the fire he’d started when his hands closed around Alexander Chamberlin’s throat.

“Do you feel powerful?”

“I feel broken. But I don’t know what’s going to come crawling out of my ashes.”

“Something magnificent I’m sure.”

The doctor was closer to him now. Will felt like he was drowning in his cologne and simultaneously being wrapped in the heat that poured off him like smoke. He was having a hard time deciphering what was real and what wasn’t. The sound of the river was deafening in his ears; the place he went to find calm, to escape was being tainted. The stag had followed him there and he had brought blood with him. If he looked hard enough he could see the man before him lurking in the trees. Waiting and watching like a wolf ready to make a kill. He saw him dressed in leather with his teeth in the rude man’s neck. Then it became his own. He could feel the blood pumping out of his body with increasing force- the stranger’s face becoming bathed in red.

All of a sudden it felt to Will that he knew this man. They’d never met, but he knew him. Their minds were connected the way that he connected with the mind of a killer while he was

at the scene of their crime. Here there was no real victim but explicit knowledge that there had been one. Many. That there would be more. This felt different from connecting with all the killers he'd caught before. He was convinced it was the same feeling but this time he didn't want to run. There was no urge to hide from him; Will was willing to be a boat pulled to shore.

"I'm going to the bathroom," Will said abruptly as he stood.

This was panic mode. He didn't know where this night was headed or how it had happened so fast, but he knew his own desires were scaring him. His cigarette remained lit, forgotten in the ashtray and he did not miss the doctor throwing a bill absently on the counter as he moved to stand himself. Will closed the door to the bathroom behind him. It was a one man stall in the back of the establishment, down a dimly lit shallow hall with one door labeled "restroom" and the other "private". He avoided looking in the mirror but splashed cold water on his face in case he was dreaming. Not quite two minutes had passed before the other man entered, pressing the lock with his thumb until it clicked into place.

Will took a step back and when he did the other man was already upon him, one leg stepping in between Will's legs and pressing against him. He was unsurprised when his back hit the wall, the man cupping his jaw with long delicate fingers and pressing their lips together like he was starved for it. Will responded with equal force, his hands wrapping around the doctor's thin but well-muscled torso, nipping at the other man's lips playfully.

"You taste like blood," he murmured against his lips when there was a lull in the kissing.

The stranger offered no verbal response, but his hands began to thread through Will's hair, gentle at first, then tugging enough to cause his scalp to burn. Will's fingers wormed their way underneath the button-down he'd been wearing underneath his expensive jacket that had somehow already made its way to the bathroom floor. His fingernails bit into the soft flesh underneath until he could feel blood well up beneath them.

His heart thudded in his ears, a ceaseless beat becoming one with the hoofbeats of the stag who wandered somewhere in the back of his mind. He felt the fingers of the doctor press against the velvety antler points poking out from his skull. A moan escaped his lips and he shuddered at the mix of pain and pleasure. The man took this moment to move his hands to unfasten Will's jeans as he took his lower lip between his teeth and bit. The coppery flavor of blood bloomed in his mouth causing his legs to weaken. He opened his eyes to meet those of his companion. He couldn't tell in the dim lighting of the bar bathroom but they were almost maroon in color and he could swear they were flecked with red.

"I don't do this." Will said.

"Nor do I. That doesn't seem to be stopping either of us."

Will shook his head. "No, it doesn't."

The other man pulled him in for a much deeper kiss, shaking Will to his core. He trembled with desire for this man that he refused to know. This stranger that he felt more connected to than he had with anyone before.

Will's own hand moved to the front of the other man's trousers where he could feel the stirrings of a hardening erection. An almost inaudible moan escaped his lips before the doctor pushed his hand away. He lowered himself to his knees and if he was in a normal state of mind Will would have laughed at the ridiculousness of the situation. As wrong as it seemed there was something so alluring about the expensively dressed man kneeling on a dirty bathroom floor with nimble fingers working his jeans and boxers down together.

The river screamed in his ears and when the waters calmed his eyes opened to see the doctor, recollecting himself rapidly and looking almost as put-together as he'd had when he arrived. Although he'd somehow managed to pull up his pants, he knew that he looked considerably more disheveled than he had when he'd arrived which was a pretty impressive achievement. The doctor eyed him carefully. He didn't speak and there was a light in his eyes that Will wasn't sure had been there before.

"Thank you," Will said awkwardly and hated himself for it.

The doctor smiled in response. "Thank you. Perhaps we'll meet again."

Perhaps not. Will couldn't imagine reliving this night. He turned away and heard the door open and listened until his footsteps drowned away into the white noise of the bar. For the first time since the night he'd killed Chamberlain Will Graham looked himself in the mirror. His eyes reflected his crime and the dark circles the hung below them showed his conflict. He ran a cautious hand through his hair, half expecting to reveal the tiniest velvet buds on either side of his temple. Of course, there was nothing there, but that didn't appease him any. Will knew that the road he had begun was a dangerous one; if he was careful it was possible he could turn off it and let his present fade to the past. In the moment it seemed plausible and he felt his life could go back to the way it was. So he hoped, god he hoped, that the man he'd met tonight did not become a part of it.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Will meets the newest member of Jack's team

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will's next week was surprisingly calm. The serial killer scene was quiet (he likely had Alex Chamberlain's dead body to thank for that). He took the week off of work- he only taught classes a few days a week and he never missed; he figured a little break was alright considering the circumstances. For the next seven days he did nothing but sleep (as best he could), drink, and take care of his dogs. Going back to routine was strange but not unwelcome. Aside from Winston, the newest addition to his pack, the dogs treated him like normal. Winston had been particularly sensitive to picking up on Will's moods since Will had found him wandering on the side of the road a couple of months ago. They'd taken a quick liking to each other and Winston had quickly realized that Will was different when he'd come back from Boston. It wasn't that he was scared of Will, but he was worried about him, that was much worse. He watched him like a deer alert for predators and if he sensed that his master was beginning to slip into his unreality he would press against him and whine until he came back. That hurt worse than his own confusion.

Will felt broken not by guilt as he should have been, but by disgust. When he closed his eyes and relived the sensation of his fingers finally cutting off Chamberlain's airway and the feeling of his pulse fading the warmth that filled him was both terrifying and exhilarating. It wasn't to say that he enjoyed the act of killing, he wouldn't call himself that far gone, but the satisfaction and the overwhelming feeling that what he'd done was *right* was certainly a pleasure. Therein lay his problem: he'd done something terrible yet felt no regret for the act. So when he saw Alex Chamberlain's knowing grin as he stood behind him in the mirror the best he could do was pour himself a glass of whiskey and light up another cigarette.

It was surreal when Will returned to work. The last few days had changed so much in him that it gave him the distinct feeling that he'd crawled out of the wardrobe and ended up somewhere so normal he'd begun to fear it. Classes should have been easy, but since he'd begun to work actively with Jack Crawford he'd had to deal with prying students wanting to get as much information as possible about current cases. That being said, the amount of times students had inquired about the "Boston Boa" in his classes was unbearable. He declined to answer most of them due to the fact that it was an open case, and therefore predominantly confidential. Even his refusal to discuss the case did nothing to disturb the image of Alexander Chamberlain seated in the back row.

He'd just finished with his last class and was sitting at his desk when he got a call from Jack Crawford. They hadn't spoken since before Will had singularly and secretly solved the Boa case; it was nothing more than a coincidence, though a pleasant one. He let it ring a few times before he picked it up.

"Jack."

"Will. I'd like you to come in today."

Will sighed and rubbed his temple absently. "Has something broken on the Boa case?" He rolled his eyes as he said the nickname. Trust Boston P.D. to come up with one of the worst serial killer monikers Will had ever heard.

"No. There's someone I would like for you to meet. He'll be working with us from now on."

"A new profiler?"

"No. A psychiatrist. He's extremely qualified."

"A psychiatrist, Jack? Why the hell is a psychiatrist joining the team?"

"I believe he'll be an asset to the team. His experience with psychotic patients could come in handy when profiling-"

"-Cut the shit, Jack. You're keeping an eye on me. Because I'm unstable."

"Will-"

"No, no, Jack, I get it. I'm unstable, I need a shrink. Especially when I'm called over to active crime scenes every other fucking day. Who is he, anyway? Why didn't you just get Alana to do it?"

Jack sighed on the other end of the line. "He was recommended to me by Alana Bloom. Alana felt she was too close to you. It would be inappropriate."

Will sighed audibly into the receiver, silently cursing Crawford for pretending to give a shit. He was reluctant but knew this was a battle he wouldn't win. "Alright. I'll meet him. I can be there in twenty."

"Make it fifteen." Jack said, and hung up the phone.

"Fuck." Will hung up the phone and pressed the heels of his hands to his eyes. The last thing he needed to worry about was an F.B.I.-hired psychiatrist on his back reporting his mental instabilities to Jack Crawford. If the guy was good, and Will was assuming he was if Alana recommended him, it wouldn't be difficult to pick up on any abnormalities in his behavior. He'd killed a man for fucks sake. Not that he thought he'd be caught, but it wasn't a stretch to say he'd be proclaimed unfit for field work. Aside from his dogs, profiling and catching killers was the one good thing he did. Looked like he would be saying goodbye to that.

Will showed up to the BAU headquarters twenty-five minutes later. He pulled out his phone to call Jack but the man showed up before he could dial. The burly man ushered him into the building muttering something along the lines of "what happened to fifteen minutes?" Will didn't argue, just followed him down the hall.

"What's your rush?"

"I don't really want to keep the man waiting, Will."

"You couldn't have picked a day I didn't have classes, Jack?"

Jack shot him a look as the two men made their way to his office. "He was already coming in today to finalize paperwork with the Bureau."

Will wanted to point out that the only reason he was here was because it had been days since Jack had seen him. All considered, that should be a good thing, but he knew Jack was worried he'd gone off the deep end. Too bad he already had. Jack walked into his office and held the door for Will, stepping behind his desk as he motioned toward the man sitting in front of it.

The blood drained from Will's face as Jack spoke, "Will, this is Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Dr. Lecter, I'd like you to meet Will Graham."

Hoofbeats of the ravenstag echoed through the hallway and Will heard it snort as it passed by. Will couldn't avoid the man's eyes as he stood and shook his hand firmly. "A pleasure," he said warmly, never breaking eye contact and holding his grip for just a hair too long.

"Doctor… Lecter."

He never thought he would see this man again yet somehow here he was in the last place Will would have expected to see him. At least on this side of the justice system.

"Will?"

Will looked up at Jack, almost not realizing that he'd spoken. The man had mistaken his hesitation for rudeness rather than shock. Let him interpret it that way; it would be better for all of them. His boss motioned for him to sit so he reluctantly took the seat next to Doctor Lecter.

His face drained of color, and aside from the prolonged eye contact he refused to look at the man. If he didn't look he could pass this off as just another hallucination. It was easier that way. Just the man's presence made him feel sick: his temples pounding with need for blood. He didn't know why this Hannibal Lecter affected him like this. He didn't know anything about the man aside from his occupation and a gut feeling that he was one of the men he hunted for a living.

Jack droned on about a case they were working on, maybe the Boa, maybe something new he hadn't seen yet. Either way, Will didn't know; he stared at a spot on the wall behind Jack and tried to picture what life would be like if he'd been someone else.

He didn't know how long he sat there but eventually Jack stood and walked around the desk to shake Lecter's hand. Will tuned in enough to hear him say, "Thank you for your time, Doctor Lecter. I think I speak for the team when I say we look forward to working with you and gaining your insight in our cases."

Hannibal chuckled. "Thank you, Jack. I was very pleased when I received your call. I'm grateful for the opportunity."

"Well, we both have Alana Bloom to thank for that." Jack clapped Hannibal on the shoulder lightly and Will internally cringed at the awkwardness of the situation.

"Indeed we do. I'll have to have the both of you over for dinner sometime." Another lingering glance in Will's direction. "Will too, of course."

Will grimaced and turned his head until Hannibal returned his attention to Jack. He tuned out until the psychiatrist was leaving Jack's office. "Very good to meet you, Will." Ice gripped his spine, threatening to breach his soul.

"What the hell was that, Will?"

"I'm sorry, Jack," he said, voice dripping with sarcasm. "Am I supposed to pretend not to be offended by this stunt?"

"I'm not going to apologize, Will. This is the only way the bureau will let me keep you as a special agent. You're saving lives, Will. You can play nice."

He didn't respond, only stood and pushed his way out of the room. Jack didn't follow him but the stench of his frustration followed Will out of the room. He couldn't give a shit one way or the other. His relationship with Jack was tense more often than not. It didn't bother him. Jack needed to pick his brain once and a while, and Will got back to doing what he did best. It was a win-win despite their sometimes strained relationship.

He stalked back to his Sedan with his hands shoved in his coat pockets; his companion, the ever- vigilant ravenstag, walked at his heels as if he was nothing more than a much larger member of his pack. Wind roughly tousled his dark curls and sliced through the fabric of his jacket. It was getting to late October and soon he'd be needing a real coat.

Will didn't hate the cold. There was something comforting about it. He'd been a loner all his life, mostly seeing himself as too weird to be around other people. The cold had its way of destroying friendliness; made everyone as alone as himself, all too worried about getting somewhere warmer to deal with other humans. It was easier going outside in a coat and scarf and not have to brush past people on crowded streets.

As he reached for the handle of his car door he was startled by a voice behind him. When he turned to see doctor Lecter leaning against a Bentley parked only a few spaces away he didn't know why he was surprised. Of course the man waited for him and of course he drove a fucking Bentley.

"Hello, Will."

“Hello, doctor Lecter.”

“I get the sense you weren’t particularly happy to see me today.”

Will shifted awkwardly with his hands in his pockets. “I’ll admit I wasn’t expecting to see you again.”

“And how do you feel now that you have?”

“I didn’t drive down here today to have you pick my brain, doctor.”

The predatory smile made its way to Hannibal’s lips. “Of course you didn’t. I only waited for you because I wanted to offer you an invitation.”

“An invitation?”

“The same one I offered in Jack’s office, although I would love to have you on your own.”

Will scoffed. “I don’t see that happening.”

“I do.” *Bastard.*

Grabbing the handle of his unlocked car, Will got into the driver’s seat. “Well then, I suppose it’s polite to say nice to meet you, but I’ve got to get home.”

“I look forward to seeing you, Will.”

Chapter End Notes

This one's kind of short and filler, sorry. I have some cool ideas I'm trying to figure out how to incorporate so the next chapter will be a lot more interesting. Thanks for reading. :)

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will is invited to dinner with Hannibal Lecter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The bastard didn't call to invite Will to dinner. The invitation was received by mail, in a tiny hand-addressed white envelope. The script on the inside was just as fancy and Will could just picture Hannibal Lecter sitting at a ridiculously ornate desk practising his calligraphy with a fountain pen *"It would please me greatly if you would join me for dinner…"* It was so uniform that if anyone else had sent the letter it he would be convinced that it had been printed. Though it didn't surprise him in the least, it pissed Will off that Dr. Lecter had escaped the medical professional's curse of bad handwriting.

The letter asked if he was free next Friday night; he'd been given two days notice. Like the Chamberlain issue, this was a paradox, and Will found himself both angry and excited to attend. He left the envelope open on his kitchen table and stared at it as he ate. Winston stood beside him and lay his head in his lap, sensing his master's dilemma.

"What do you think, buddy?" He asked his dog softly.

The mutt raised his ears and whined gently in response. Will reached down, scratched his ears and slipped him a piece of his breakfast. This caught the attention of the rest of the pack and he had to get up and hand out treats to each of the six to calm their jealousy. He knelt down to be at eye level with a couple of the bigger dogs and petted them, giving each dog separate attention. Will was far from perfect, but he did care for his dogs.

He glanced back at the invitation on the table, already mad at himself because deep down he knew he'd decided to go. After that choice was made there was nothing really for Will to do but wait. There was a stack of papers he had to go through; an assignment he'd given his students to write up a profile of the suspected killer of a crime scene Jack's team had looked at a couple weeks back. There were some strange elements to the case so they'd been called in. It turned out to be nothing, Will had said as much within the first ten minutes on the scene, but it took quite a bit of convincing to get Jack to back down. One of Jack Crawford's most irritating features was that he tended to resist anything that wasn't what he wanted to hear; when Will told him a case was nothing he got a load of shit from Crawford despite always being right in the end.

Shuffling through the stacks of student's proposed profiles was always disappointing. Sure, every so often there would be a promising student, but never what he was looking for. It was

pathetic, but secretly he always hoped that one of his students would be like him. Someone who was in the academy for the same reasons as he had been, who would eventually be turned away from real F.B.I. work and given a laminate in favor of a badge due to instability. But of course, nobody was like him. Reading their work always proved that. Perhaps somewhere out there somebody was plagued with the same numbing empathy, but nobody he would ever meet.

Before he knew it, it was Friday afternoon and he found himself embarrassed as he tried to dress himself for the occasion. From what he'd seen of Lecter, the man had expensive taste, and the funds to support it. He also was the charismatic type, so perhaps he'd dress himself to make Will feel comfortable. Then again, he hadn't called to confirm his attendance, so maybe he'd be wearing whatever it was he wore casually around the house. Fuck. This shouldn't be so hard.

In the end, he selected a periwinkle blue button-down with his nicest jeans and dark loafers. Dressier than his standard, without going overboard. In all honesty, however, this attire was the second nicest thing he owned, he had a neglected black suit hanging in his closet in case occasion ever arose.

Baltimore was about an hour away from Wolf Trap, and in a panic, he had given himself more than enough time to get to Lecter's house on time. He didn't know if there was more to it than that, but he didn't dwell on it. Before long he found himself pulling over at a liquor store and wandering inside.

Routine had him headed over to buy a bottle of Jack Daniels that would last only a few days, but with his dinner companion in mind he selected a red wine instead. Something a little above his pay grade for a casual dinner, with a name he couldn't pronounce, but he felt embarrassed bringing anything else. Even with the expense, he worried that it wasn't enough. Hannibal Lecter intimidated him in more ways than he could count, the least he could do for his own sanity was pick a wine that the doctor wouldn't scoff at. As he got back in his car he found himself hoping that Hannibal was indeed the wine man he was expecting.

When Will found himself on the street Lecter had given as his address, he checked the house number three times. He wasn't even surprised. Nothing about the man had surprised him and perhaps that was even more frustrating than his extravagance. The most unsettling part about it was that there was no reason for the two to ever cross paths except in a clinical sense. As much as he was resistant to therapy, there were a lot of signs pointing to him ending up here as a patient at some point. Instead there was a night at a bar where neither of them belonged and an unspoken, illogical connection that seemed to be rooted in blood. Perhaps it was an entirely coincidental circumstance that Jack Crawford had hired the man, but even if that were true Hannibal had still managed to rope him into a one-on-one dinner.

A gentle tapping on his window shook Will from his own thoughts. He looked up into the glassy black eyes of his hooved and feathered friend and sighed. He checked his watch. 6:59. Dinner at 7. If Will Graham was anything at least he was punctual. As he made his way to the front door he couldn't stop himself from checking over his shoulder.

He hesitated again on the porch. His car was just across the street. Not too late to run back to it and drive off. Might make for an awkward work situation, but standing up your therapist

probably isn't any better than hooking up with your future therapist in a bar bathroom. At the insistence of the stag, and not of his own accord he knocked on the door.

Not five seconds had gone by before a three-piece-suit-clad Hannibal Lecter opened the door.

"Will! Impeccable timing."

Will frowned, handing over the bottle of wine he'd purchased earlier. "I was still debating whether or not to come inside." He scratched his head. "Ah, I'm sorry for not confirming my invitation."

Hannibal hummed to himself, eyeing the label with what Will hoped was approval. "Quite alright, your company was expected."

He stood to the side and allowed Will to pass him and enter the threshold. Will couldn't help but feel like he'd entered into a dragon's lair. Despite the extravagant decoration, he wasn't convinced it was anything more than a well-disguised cave. The interior was dark, not that he was surprised. It was probably a lot more inviting during the day, but as it was the space had dim overhead lights in the form of multiple, small, but tasteful chandeliers. Looking at the walls, he realized the reason for the gothic lighting was likely set to preserve the art that hung on the walls. Lecter had money and didn't care to hide it.

Will realized he was gawking when Hannibal stepped in front of him, holding the wine bottle and eyeing him carefully.

"Will?"

"Hm?" Will turned to his host. "You have very extravagant tastes."

"I do appreciate beauty, where I see it."

Will found himself unable to respond, instead opting to examine what looked like a Japanese samurai sword hanging on the wall.

"Would you like me to escort you to the dining room?

Will got the impression that the doctor didn't appreciate his snooping. Or maybe he was just anxious to serve dinner.

"You'd think that with all the decoration you'd want to show it off," Will commented.

"Perhaps a tour later this evening."

"Perhaps." Will repeated quietly.

Hannibal lead Will into his dining room. Will's eyes traced every surface of the area, studying it as he would a crime scene. The walls were painted the indigo color of the sky right before the sun disappeared from the horizon. Despite the darkness of the walls, the room didn't feel cramped, the space opened up by one wall that was adorned with three long planters brimming with bright green foliage. Across from the planters was a fireplace, the

mantle adorned with horns of various beasts and lamps on either end. Above this was a painting in a gold colored frame that Will guessed was another original work. In the back corner was a small table with another lamp. A painting hung over this table as well, but it was obscured by a decorative arrangement in a wide vase.

The table was in the center of the room, Will estimated it was large enough for ten people to sit around, although only two chairs were present. The places Hannibal had set up were near the far end of the room. A set of glass doors led outside, but were closed now. There was a chandelier hanging above the table, and the table was adorned with an elaborate centerpiece. An arrangement of large, red flowers were nestled among various other leafy foliage in shades of green and brown. Will couldn't resist reaching out and touching one of the flowers. It was real. Of course it was.

He turned as Hannibal reentered the room; as observant as he was, he hadn't even noticed the man had left. He carried two plates with him, standing patiently while he waited for Will to seat himself. Will chose the seat closest to the fireplace and watched his host curiously while he set a plate in front of him, and the other in his own place. He left briefly to return with a carafe of wine and two glasses.

"An entrecôte of lamb, with a simple cumberland sauce, paired with a Chianti Classico."

Will looked down at the food in front of him. The lamb was rare, drizzled with sauce a deep purple-red in color. He couldn't remember the last time he'd eaten something so exquisite, perhaps he never had.

"You're a chef, as well, I take it."

"I transferred my passion for anatomy into the culinary arts." Hannibal responded, with a smile.

"Of course you did." Will mused, lifting a bite of the tender meat to his lips. Hannibal watched him, of course waiting for Will to begin eating before he himself took a bite.

"It's delicious." Will complimented without looking up.

"Thank you." He responded.

Will made no effort to speak again. Doctor Lecter had extended the invitation, and no doubt they had much to discuss, but Will certainly wasn't going to be the one to bring any of it up. His initial meeting with Lecter had been far from dignified, although his bigger concern at the moment was the way he'd seemed to see through him, even then. Like one look into his eyes was enough to recall Will's crime and view it as if it were projected onto a screen. Of course, there was no way he could really know what had happened, just as there was no way for Will to know that the Doctor was a killer, and yet, he knew.

"I must admit, I haven't been entirely honest with you."

Lecter's voice snapped Will from his own thoughts. He lowered his fork and looked at his host cautiously. "In what way?"

“The night we met. Though at first my concern was for a stranger, I recognized you soon after we began speaking. I couldn’t help but want to research you after Jack extended his invitation for employment.” He took a sip of wine, holding eye contact.

Will pursed his lips and looked at his plate. He could feel a flush rising to his cheeks, annoyed that he was powerless to stop it. “So we *are* going to discuss that?”

“We don't have to if it makes you uncomfortable.” Hannibal said slowly.

Will shrugged. “Seems it was an inappropriate course of action, considering our current circumstances.”

“Unorthodox, I’ll admit. Although I don’t regret it. You fascinate me, Will.”

“Fascination is room for miscreant behavior?” Will asked without looking up. Hannibal’s intensity was both terrifying and alluring.

“At the time we were breaking no rules.”

“And now?”

“Dinner, Will. I don’t think it’s out of line for us to be friendly.”

“I get the impression that you’re looking for something a bit more than friendly.”

“I’m looking forward to picking your brain. Your empathy is extraordinary. Something I’ve never seen before. You’re unique, Will. And as we briefly discussed the other night I do believe we are similar in nature.”

“I’m not sure that’s anything that particularly needs discussing,” Will said, trying not to show his alarm.

“I disagree, but of course, all in due time.”

Will put down his fork. “Why do I get the feeling that you’re threatening me?”

“I wouldn’t see it as such.”

“I’ve noticed you have a way of elevating your own opinions.”

“I feel as if we could be great friends, Will.” Hannibal’s stare bore against him like scalding rays of afternoon sun. Will stared back, defiant.

“Did you choose this dish specifically because it resembled blood?” Will changed the subject abruptly.

Hannibal looked at him and didn’t respond.

“Tell me, Doctor Lecter, do you still have the cuts in your back that I gave you the other night?” Will’s own brash behavior shocked him.

“They’re in the process of healing.”

Will laughed. “Have you been thinking of me, Doctor?”

“You were leading me to believe you found this line of questioning inappropriate.”

“I do. I wanted you to admit there was more to this invitation than, uh, friendship.”

“Very well.” Hannibal’s eyes were dark.

“No sly comeback for that one?” Will wondered for a moment if he was drunk, even knowing full well that he’d consumed less than a glass of wine. Jack’s fears might be right after all, in this moment he felt he could be unstable. At the very least he was confused.

“I could come up with one if you would like.”

“No. I apologize,” Will murmured. “I don’t think I was aware of my intentions when I decided to show up tonight. I’m still not sure where I stand.”

“Would you care to stay for dessert?”

“Would I…?” Will trailed off, letting his eyes drop down to his plate. At some point he’d finished his meal, leaving only a dark purple stain on the china. He almost felt guilty for not paying attention to his food, after all, Hannibal had clearly put in a great effort to cook for him.

“A chocolate mousse with raspberry compote.” Hannibal continued.

“No.” Will answered abruptly. “No. I don’t think that would be wise. I really should get going.”

“Very well.” Hannibal pushed his seat back and stood up, prompting Will to do the same. “Are you sure I can’t convince you?”

“It’s a long drive back to Wolf Trap.” It was barely past 8 o’clock but Hannibal didn’t challenge his excuse.

Hannibal walked Will slowly back to the front door. Will tried to occupy himself by taking a closer look at his interior decor rather than make painful small talk with his host. After the conversation they’d had tonight there was no point in trying to diffuse it all by mentioning the weather. They stopped at the door, which Hannibal opened for him while standing entirely too close. Close enough that Will could feel the heat coming off his body in contrast to the breeze from outside.

“Thank you for dinner.”

“It was my pleasure. It’s a shame you can’t stay longer. I’ve enjoyed your company tonight.”

“Right,” Will managed. “Good night, Doctor Lecter.”

“Good night, Will.”

Hannibal’s heavy door closed behind him, and Will didn’t look back as he made his way back to his waiting car. His heart pounded in his chest as if he’d made some kind of narrow escape. In a way he had, as he wasn’t entirely sure what would’ve happened tonight if he’d stayed for dessert and another glass of wine. Lecter was toying with him, that was clear. What Will couldn’t seem to get straight was whether he was running away because he didn’t want that, or because he didn’t want to admit that he did.

The engine rumbled to life and he drove off, pretending to miss the silhouette of Hannibal Lecter standing in his doorway until Will’s vehicle was out of sight.

Chapter End Notes

Decided to revisit this work now that I have more time to sit down and write. Thanks for reading!

Chapter 4

Somehow Alexander Chamberlain looked smug, even in death. His glassy eyes challenged Will Graham every time he closed his own. His bloodstained teeth smiled up at him in mockery. *We're no different, you and I.* He challenged. The thought sent shivers down Will's spine, although Chamberlain wasn't exactly right.

"You were never innocent." Will countered. The ravenstag snorted his agreement from over Will's shoulder.

Seven girls that they knew of. Likely more from before he developed his full-blown modus operandi. Most serial killers started with a mistake or two.

But we all die just the same. His voice echoed in Will's head, sounding without the dead man even moving his mouth.

He looked up at the moon glowing through the kitchen window, although he knew it hadn't been out on that night. When he looked back down at the body he could see a figure reflected in his blood. Hannibal Lecter smiled at him. "Hello, Will."

A cacophony of barking caused Will to open his eyes. The tiniest tendrils of early morning sun sifted through his opened window. He shivered in the breeze. As usual, his sheets were damp underneath him. The night sweats were unlikely to stop before the nightmares did, and thus, not at all. He sighed as he sat up, immediately beginning to peel his sheets from the bed despite the protests from the pack at their lack of breakfast.

One of the larger dogs bumped up against his leg, whining gently. He scratched the dog's ears gently. "Soon, boy," He said softly.

He wadded up his dark blue sheets, carrying them downstairs and tossing them on the floor of the laundry, his dogs following at his heels all the way. If he concentrated he could almost pretend he was still the person he had been only a few weeks ago. The dog's barking subsided when they finally had their meal. Will watched them quietly. He didn't eat breakfast most days. Usually had pretty low chances of keeping anything down.

By the time he let the dogs out for their morning run the sun had begun to break over the treetops in a golden glow. Watching his pack romp through the tall grasses that surrounded his rural home was one of the few things that really brought him any peace. Winston broke off from the group, running back up to Will, wagging his tail furiously. His enthusiasm was enough to get Will to crack a smile.

"Hey, Winston." He greeted.

The mutt licked his hand excitedly. For being the newest member of Will's little family, Winston had a way of seeing through his moods. An empath in his own right. The dog's ears perked up at a new chorus of barks from out in the field. A rustle in the grass revealed a deer who'd been out enjoying a morning graze.

“Go on, bud.” He prompted. “I need to get ready for work anyway.” Winston whined before turning and bounding down the stairs to join the others.

Will left the dogs to run and went inside to dress himself for a lecture he wasn’t ready to give. The last few weeks it had been understandably more difficult to separate himself from the things he was talking about. Even showered and dressed in fresh clothes he could see how disheveled he looked in the mirror. With any luck he wouldn’t have to check-in with Jack Crawford today. He’d had enough conversations about his mental health in the last week and would be happy to avoid another. After a last glance in the mirror he decided to run a comb once more through his hair. It made little difference but nobody could say he didn’t try.

Back out on the porch he couldn’t resist sparking up a cigarette. His feeble attempts to quit his renewed habit weren’t going to be enough after the dream he had this morning. It was bad enough that he had to keep reliving his darkest moment. Last night’s addition of the piercing gaze of Hannibal Lecter was almost too much. It was too easy to imagine he had been there the whole time.

He whistled to get the attention of the dogs who were now loafing about on their own, evidently having chased away any wildlife that had been lingering in the area. Winston, ever the leader, came bounding back to the house at a run, the others slowly following while paying more attention to sniffing at the ground. Will stood to the side and allowed the six dogs to pass into the house.

“I’ll be back tonight.”

He locked the front door behind him, shouldering his bag and putting out his cigarette next to the other butts in the ashtray he’d guiltily placed on the porch.

The drive into Quantico this morning was uneventful. As was his first lecture of the day. It was past lunchtime before things once again got complicated. He smelled Hannibal Lecter before he saw him. His footsteps seemed to echo in the empty lecture hall. Will let him approach his desk before he bothered to look up.

Today Doctor Lecter was dressed in a light grey waistcoat adorned with light gold pinstripes, the matching suitcoat was folded and hanging over one arm. This was worn over a satiny maroon button down, the ensemble completed by a red and gold paisley tie. His hair, of course, looked perfect. Will peered up at him through his glasses and resisted the urge to comb through his own hair with his fingers. It wouldn’t make a difference anyway.

“Sorry if I’m interrupting.” Hannibal said.

“Not at all.” Will replied. “Is there something I can do for you?”

“I was actually just dropping by. I brought dessert from the other night. As I said, it’s a shame you weren’t able to stay.”

Hannibal set a glass container on his desk. A lower attachment contained ice to keep the contents chilled.

Will blinked. “You shouldn’t have.”

“I wanted to. Mousse will stay good for about four days when kept chilled. It was intended for you after all.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re very welcome.”

Will tried not to be surprised at the warmth in Hannibal’s voice. After his brief couple of meeting with the man he wasn't sure where anything stood. It was clear Hannibal had taken an interest in him, something which he knew surpassed romance. This factor was terrifying. He didn't know much about Hannibal at this point except that he was a man of many talents. And although he had no way of confirming it, he knew one of those was certainly murderous. Disturbingly, it wasn't this in of itself that scared him, rather how he himself would react to such an influence. He was distracted when they'd met. Impulsive. It was supposed to be one night, not an ongoing friendship. He may have to work alongside Doctor Lecter but it would be best to keep him at arm's length. Will may have made a mistake with Alexander Chamberlain, but he wasn't a killer. Not really.

The ravenstag’s hooves clipped brightly on the linoleum of the Academy floor. The great beast stopped outside his classroom, pacing and snorting as Will’s thoughts exposed his denial. Fuck him. The creature was nothing more than his own tortured imagination. It cocked its head at him and blinked.

“Will?”

Will looked up. He'd almost forgotten Hannibal was still here. “Yes?”

“I was just in to see Jack Crawford, he mentioned wanting to talk to you. I thought I would offer you a forewarning.”

Will sighed, running his hands through his hair. He was expecting this when he left the house this morning, but it didn’t take away his hope that he might avoid this conversation another day.

“Right. Thanks. Again.”

Hannibal smiled at him. “Of course. Enjoy the mousse.”

The man turned to leave and Will found himself watching until his footsteps faded down the hall. It was possible his thoughts were just clouded, but Hannibal felt different today. During their first meeting, he’d felt overwhelmingly predatory in his enigmatic way. Even on Friday night he could feel the darkness within Hannibal surrounding them. Today he felt alarmingly normal. It didn’t make any sense that he could see him so clearly before only to have it pulled away now. He felt like a completely different man, and yet, nothing had outwardly changed.

Will tapped his fingers on his desk anxiously. He couldn’t understand how Hannibal could withdraw so fully. Not only that, but he found himself frustrated with this new development.

He'd been planning to keep Hannibal at arm's length, but a part of him was offended at being shut out. Hannibal had let Will see him, even for those brief moments, and taking that back was aggravating. As if he'd proven himself unworthy. How could one man cause such ambivalence in him in only a matter of days?

He rubbed at his eye, holding his glasses aside. Goddamn Hannibal. Will glanced at the container the man had left for him and opened it up. An almost intoxicating aroma of chocolate wafted into the air the second he removed the lid. Will had never had a particular fondness for chocolate, but in spite of that, Hannibal's cooking was delicious. Besides, dessert for lunch was better than no lunch, which was his original plan.

Will was putting together lecture notes for his next class when he got Jack's phone call. Even with the warning, it took him a minute to pick up the phone.

"Jack."

"Will. I was beginning to wonder if you were going to pick up."

So was I. Will bit back. "What can I do for you?"

"Finished with classes for the day?"

"You know my schedule, Jack."

"I'd like to see you in my office. Today."

"I'll be there."

Jack hung up the phone unceremoniously. For Will, it was a momentary relief. He'd agreed to go back into the field at Jack's insistence that he was saving lives. When he'd killed the Boston Boa he'd still been saving lives, just not in the way he originally intended.

Entering the building that housed Jack's office, Will had to take a moment to breathe. He could hear blood flowing in his ears, sounding, for a moment, like heavy winds. He stumbled as if the wind were real, closing his eyes to steady himself.

"Will?"

He opened his eyes at the sound of the voice.

"Alana?"

The attractive dark-haired woman made her way toward him, smiling warmly. As she got closer, the smile faded. "Are you alright, Will?"

Will scratched at his arm awkwardly. "I'm fine."

"I was just here speaking to Jack- how is. How have you been now that you're back in the field?" Her blue eyes studied his, concern evident on her face.

“I’m alright, Alana.”

Alana’s smile returned, although more reserved than it had been before. “I’m glad.” She brushed a lock of hair behind her ear. “Have you met Hannibal yet? Jack had asked me for a recommendation on a good psychiatrist. Dr. Lecter could very well be the best I’ve ever met.”

“Yes, we’ve been introduced.” Will said politely, pushing past the images that flooded his mind of their first meeting.

“Well, I should get going. Good luck with Jack, I assume that’s why you’re here?” Alana raised an eyebrow at him, chuckled a bit when Will’s frown gave her an answer.

“It’s good to see you Will, it really is.”

“It’s good to see you to.”

“Take care of yourself.” Alana said, touching his arm lightly before walking off in the direction of the parking lot.

The way Alana could say such a clichéd phrase so earnestly would never cease to amaze Will. At the same time, her careful way of tiptoeing around him and his feelings was once again a frustration. After she walked away he took one more moment to prepare himself before he made his way to Jack’s office.

“Will. Close the door, if you would?” Jack greeted as Will stepped into his office.

He took a seat opposite Jack’s desk, carefully placing his hands on the armrests.

“Seven confirmed killings, Will. Seven women murdered all within two months of each other. It’s been going on three weeks, and it’s beginning to look like the Boston Boa has disappeared. Where did he go?”

Jack’s eyes bored into Will. Not accusing, of course not, but piercing all the same. Jack Crawford was in the business of closing cases, especially now that his favorite pet was back on the team. Of course he was angry. Will Graham may have his problems, but the clearance rate for cases he profiled was almost impeccable.

“I don’t know, Jack.”

“That’s not an answer. Not from you.”

Will sighed, slightly biting the inside of his lip. “The way I see it there’s two possible scenarios.” *One: I killed him. Two: I buried him.*

The ravenstag mocked him, black pupiless eyes staring coldly into his. The beast snorted, as usual, stamping his hooves rhythmically against the linoleum.

“You may want to start combing through Boston arrest records for the last couple weeks. Stalking, harassment, even shoplifting. It won’t be obvious. Either he’s gotten himself

arrested for something unrelated to the murders, or he's gone. Something may have spooked him. Maybe a close encounter with police, possibly just antsy with all the news coverage. If he thought we were close to finding him, he may have fled." Will supplied.

"That's not what I want to hear." Jack said tonelessly.

"If he's fled Boston, he'll kill again. Probably not right away, but soon. If he's out there we'll catch him, Jack. He's not the Chesapeake Ripper."

Crawford bristled at the mention. Will's regret was almost instantaneous after the words left his mouth. Jack was already angry enough without mention of what he considered his biggest failure.

"I'll have a team look through arrest records. Be prepared to look at any files of interest. In the meantime, don't get comfortable in the classroom. We've got a crime scene in Atlanta. The team will be leaving tomorrow morning."

End Notes

This is the first chapter of a fic that's based on the idea that Will made his first kill on his own shortly before meeting Hannibal. I don't know how long it will end up being, but if you made it this far, thanks for reading and I hope you'll continue. :) More characters, tags, etc. will be added as this moves along.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!